

International Arts Strategy 2015-20

Impact report

September 2021



Acknowledgement of country

The Australia Council for the Arts proudly acknowledges all First Nations peoples and their rich cultures of the country we now call Australia. We pay respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge First Nations peoples as Australia's First Peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands and waters on which we live.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of First Nations peoples and communities to Australian life, and how this continuation of over 75,000 years of unbroken storytelling enriches us. We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards ensuring an equal voice and the equality of outcomes in all aspects of our society.

Our contributors

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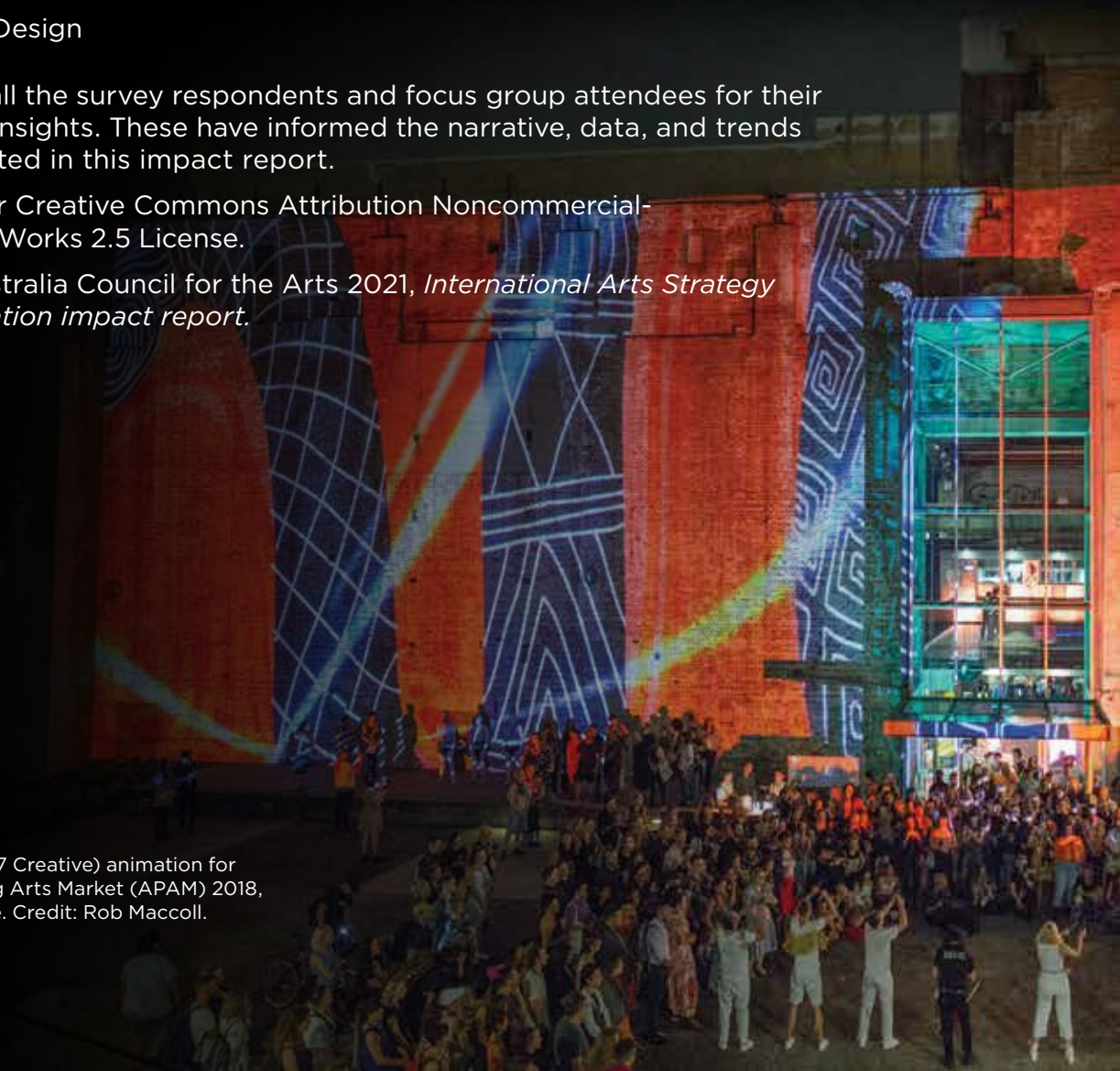
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We also thank all the survey respondents and focus group attendees for their responses and insights. These have informed the narrative, data, and trends analysis presented in this impact report.

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Cover image: Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, *Pretty Beach*, 2019, installation view, *The National 2019: New Australian Art*. Courtesy Museum of Contemporary Art Australia.

Introduction

For many artists, international engagement is the lifeblood of creativity: it sustains and develops practices and careers. Australian arts are in demand globally. Through arts, culture and creativity, Australian stories and perspectives are shared with the world.



Brook Andrew, *In Vision of Nuance: Systems of Exposure*, 2019, installation view, Wuzhen International Contemporary Art Exhibition, China. Courtesy the artist.

As home to the oldest living culture and one of the most culturally diverse populations in the world, our relationships and concerns naturally extend beyond national borders. Arts and creativity have a unique ability to build the types of transnational relationships that will fuel our society and economy in the digital age.

For decades, the Australia Council has been a leading public investor in Australian international arts and cultural activity. Our investment has supported the aspirations and achievements of Australian artists and organisations and the global reach of Australian creativity.

Strategic investment in international engagement supports cultural understanding and exchange, and the development of new markets for Australian cultural content. International engagement strengthens our reputation as a creative and cultural nation with a sophisticated, confident, outward-looking cultural sector. For Australian artists, creative workers and organisations, investment in international engagement supports skills, career trajectories, financial sustainability and creative growth.

As with many areas of social and economic life, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted international arts activity, resulting in significant loss of income for many in Australia's cultural and creative sector. All art forms and existing pathways for global connection, collaboration, presentation and distribution have been impacted.

In a post-pandemic future, where physical mobility may continue to be limited, the Council's strategic international engagement activity will be even more critical.

This impact report presents findings and insights from an evaluation of the Australia Council's International Arts Strategy for 2015–20.¹

The Australia Council remains committed to supporting Australian artists, creative workers and organisations to stay connected internationally, and to respond to ongoing challenges to cross-border collaboration. Galvanising the successes and learnings from the past five years will help to identify the most effective strategies for the critical task of strengthening international engagement into the future.

1 Australia Council 2015, *International Arts Strategy (2015–20)*.

Why international

Between 2015 and 2020, the Council's investment in international engagement was designed to support:

- **Continual revitalisation of Australian arts practice** through channels for artists that expand career pathways, income streams, arts practice, and reciprocal connections.
- **Economic stability of the sector.** International demand provides a vital source of income for Australian artists, supporting them to build careers, reinvest in practice and continue making art.
- The opportunity for **Australian audiences to experience the best of international arts**, wherever they live.

‘International engagement is embedded in our DNA. Cross-pollination as humans is necessary. As artists it needs to occur as art cannot survive in an airtight container. Working with people from all over offers an opportunity for diversity of thought to connect directly and imagine ourselves outside of ourselves.’

Raghav Handa, independent dancer and choreographer, Focus Group, March 2021



Raghav Handa, *Mens Rea: The Shifter's Intent*.
Credit: Heidrun Lohr.

Through review, reflection and deep listening to the sector, the following priorities have been identified for the new strategic period 2021-2025:

- **Develop new approaches** that align with the prevailing values in global protocols and practice.
- **Empower Australian artists and creative workers** to use hybrid models; technology; risk-taking and experimentation; to expand their international networks and avenues for creation, distribution, and profile-building.
- **Foster sustainable careers** through market access, diversifying income and revenue streams; reciprocal partnerships and co-investment; and embedding climate responsible processes.
- **Invest in artists and creative workers from all communities** that reflect the narrative of contemporary Australia.



The International Arts Strategy (2015–20)

The Australia Council's International Arts Strategy detailed the objectives and approaches of our strategic international development work, which complements but operates separately to our grants programs. The strategy was part of the delivery of the Council's strategic plan for *A Culturally Ambitious Nation (2014-19)*,² which set the goal that 'Australian arts are without borders'.

The strategy was informed by sector consultation and research the Council commissioned.³ This clearly highlighted the value Australian artists place on international engagement; the market development opportunities that can flow from international relationships; and the need for the Council to provide structure and strategic support.

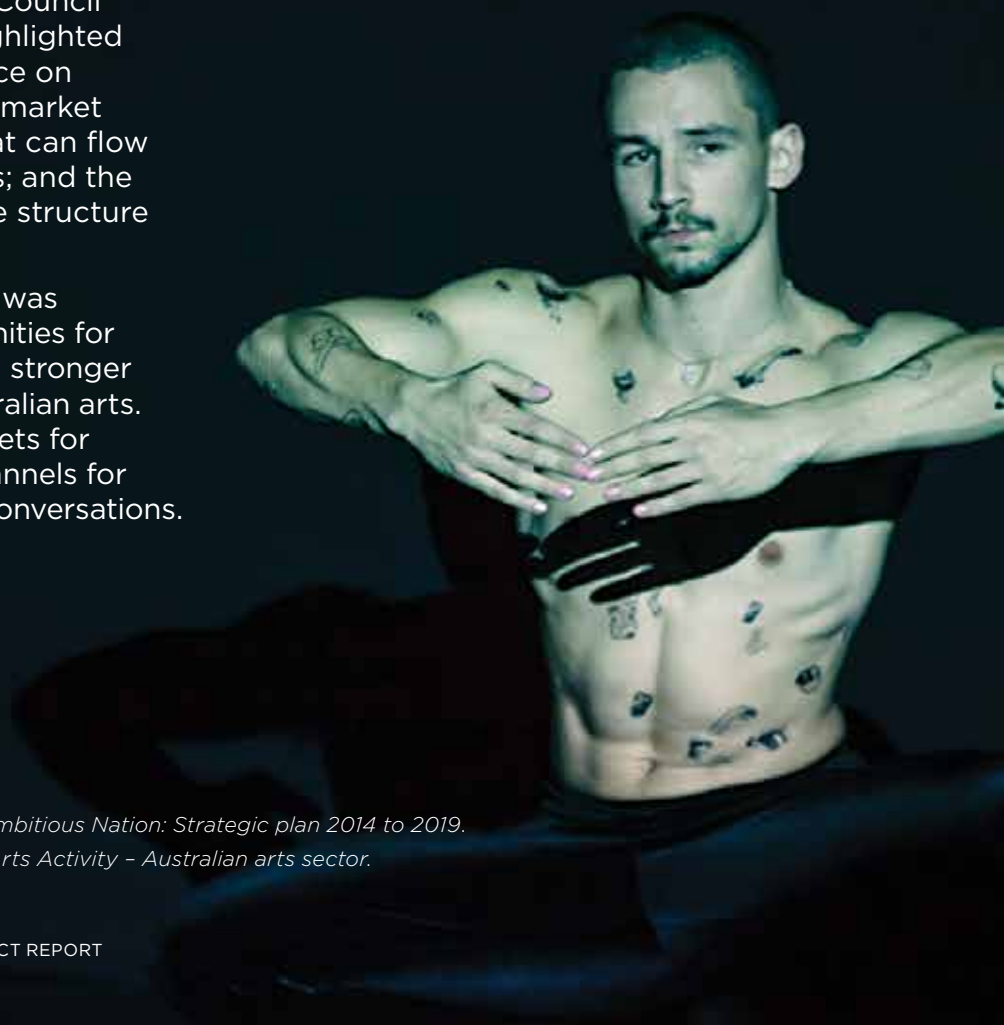
The International Arts Strategy was designed to maximise opportunities for Australian artists and support a stronger international presence for Australian arts. It set out to create robust markets for Australian arts globally and channels for artists to contribute to global conversations.

Under the strategy, the Australia Council's international engagement and market development activities expanded from an export and outbound focus to the exchange of practice, knowledge and expertise with our international counterparts. This acknowledges the different kinds of intervention required to serve the needs and demands of cultural exchange, market nuance, art form areas and geographic regions; and the intersections in between.

James Batchelor, *Hyperspace*.
Credit: Urska Boljkovac.

² Australia Council 2014, *A Culturally Ambitious Nation: Strategic plan 2014 to 2019*.

³ Australia Council 2015, *International Arts Activity – Australian arts sector*.



In May 2015, changes to the Australia Council's appropriation, and an organisational restructure, had a significant impact on the delivery of international grants and strategic initiatives.

Delivery of the strategy has required much learning and adaptation in response to changing conditions in the sector, the funding environment, and across the world. As well as the COVID-19 pandemic, the past five years have seen increasing awareness of climate sustainable practice and shifting geo-politics. Rising calls within the sector for sustainable and decolonised practice have demanded consideration of new ways of working.

The findings in this report reflect necessary pivots and re-prioritisations throughout the strategy period. However, the predominant story is one of success, with the total spend of \$8 million resulting in significant positive impacts across the strategy's objectives.

Strategic objectives

	Objective	Outcome
1	To build capacity and increase growth for Australian arts in established markets, while responding to emerging trends and new markets	Develop markets to support sector/ career sustainability
2	To support and stimulate international opportunities for Australian artists	Develop markets to support sector/ career sustainability
3	To provide opportunities for cultural exchange, skills and creative development within a global context	Facilitate connection and relationship building
4	To build capacity of the Australian arts sector to engage and participate internationally	Build skills and knowledge in the sector
5	To showcase Australian art and artists internationally and here in Australia to international tastemakers	Increase presence/exposure/advocacy for artists
6	To support a diverse and inclusive global art making practice that actively prioritises First Nations, disability, ageing and young people-focused practices.	Apply the Cultural Engagement Framework (CEF)

IAS mechanism

Mechanism	Objective Supported	Total Spend %	Total Activity %
International Arts Strategy Outcomes Fund (IASOF)	1, 2 and 4	47%	18%
Residencies	2	15%	9%
Outbound Programs/ In-Market Platforms	1, 3, 5 and 6	17% / 1%	42% / 7%
Incoming Visitor Programs	1	9%	14%
Labs, Exchanges and Reciprocal Programs	2 and 6	5%	7%
Responsive Strategic Investments	4	3%	2%
Tailored strategic advice and advocacy	Sits across all goals	N/A	N/A
Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM)	Sits across all goals	4%	0.1%

All The Queens Men, *Fun Run*. Presented by Ansan Street Arts Festival, South Korea, 2015. Credit: Studio Pal.



International Arts Strategy Outcomes Fund (IASOF)

The IASOF supported opportunities that directly arose from strategic initiatives delivered by the Australia Council in the target international regions under the IAS: Europe, North America, North Asia, South and Southeast Asia. For example, tours, presentations, exhibitions and translations of Australian work.

Residencies

The suite of international Residencies offered a time, place, space across the target international regions under the IAS. These programs provided an opportunity for artists to develop their practice, produce new work, establish new networks, and extend critical discourse on their practice.

Outbound Programs/In-Market Platforms

Outbound Programs supported artists and creative workers to attend key market platforms, meetings, networks, and gatherings internationally. These platforms have offered an opportunity to pitch, profile and showcase new ideas and/or tour-ready work, develop collaborative relationships, and expand their practice to established and emerging international markets.

In-Market Platforms supported key international influencers within the target international regions to attend significant presentations of Australian work in their region.

Incoming Visitor Programs

Incoming Visitor Programs are a mechanism inviting international tastemakers to Australia with the express premise of introducing them to Australian artists, organisations and the Australian cultural landscape, such as the Visiting International Curators (VICs) Program, Visiting International Publishers (VIPs) Program, Dance Massive and Liveworks Festival of Experimental Art.

Labs, Exchanges and Reciprocal Programs

Labs, Exchanges and Reciprocal Programs focus on peer-to-peer relationships, knowledge sharing, and building networks without the pressure of generating new work.

Responsive Strategic Investments

Responsive Strategic Investments are agile, responsive, and discretionary funding mechanisms that support a small number of quick turnaround initiatives on invitation or request by the sector.

Tailored strategic advice and advocacy

Tailored strategic advice is provided by the International Development Consultants, who are based in each of the priority regions, and by the International Market Advisers, based in Australia. Strategy and programs for the region are co-designed and developed with a lens on both the Australian artistic landscape and deep listening, networks, presence, and visibility on the ground in the priority regions.

Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM)

APAM is a multi-year strategic initiative of the Australia Council. It champions contemporary Australian performance nationally and internationally by deepening relationships and stimulating new markets and pathways through exchange, reciprocity, and hospitality.

Evaluation method

In evaluating the activity of the International Arts Strategy (2015-20) against its objectives, this report draws on:

- Analysis of data on strategic international engagement activity from July 2015 to June 2020
- Qualitative analysis of acquittal reporting to explore outcomes
- Analysis of the International Activity Evaluation Survey 2021 (96 responses, individuals and organisations)
- A survey of those who partnered with the Council to deliver international programs (32 responses, partner organisations)
- Four focus groups conducted over March 2021 involving a range of artists, including those who had been supported by the Australia Council and those who had not
- Consultation with the Australia Council's International development team, and broader staff.

A note on the impact of COVID-19 on the evaluation

The evaluation largely reflected on a time prior to the impacts of COVID-19, with first lock-downs implemented in March 2020. The sector was, however, facing a critical period when the survey and focus groups were conducted in early 2021, and the experiences of the pandemic were evident in survey responses and focus group discussions.





2021 Sydney Writers' Festival.
Credit: Nick De Lorenzo.

Evaluation findings

The International Arts Strategy (2015–20) delivered:



Over \$8

million of
investment



510

instances of
funding to
individuals



424

instances of
funding to
organisations



Growth

in investment over
the four years of
the strategy

Through the International Arts Strategy (2015–20):

- established markets for dance, theatre and visual arts were capitalised upon
- niche markets for theatre for young audiences, emerging and experimental practice and literature were developed
- tailored creative development opportunities across all art forms were supported
- peer exchanges and international collaborations were supported, leading to co-commissions and co-productions of new work
- relationships were cultivated and have been maintained, with the potential to bear creative outcomes for years to come
- Australian work was showcased to taste makers in the strategy's stated priority regions of North America, Europe, North Asia and South and Southeast Asia

Engagement with Asia strengthened:

- Investment in staff resources and expertise enabled the Council to develop a sophisticated approach to reciprocal engagement in Asia
- Work with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and diaspora driven engagement have been strong in Asia
- 25% of total International Arts Strategy investment was directed to Asia (\$2.1 million), generating 30% of activity

Investment in First Nations, CALD and LGBTQI+ artists and creative workers increased:

- Investment in First Nations, CALD and LGBTQI+ artists and creative workers grew from a low base to strong representation by the final year of the IAS
- First Nations artists were supported to strengthen connections, build knowledge, and share experiences with global First Nations communities
- First Nations arts practice and perspectives were shared on the world stage, including development of markets for First Nations work in North America and Taiwan
- Work is still needed to support equitable access for artists with disability and artists in regional or remote areas.

Responses to the 2021 International Activity Evaluation Survey⁴ showed that artists supported by the Australia Council were more likely to engage internationally in a range of ways, compared to those who did not receive support:



67%

undertook collaborations, partnerships or reciprocal programs with international artists or arts organisations (compared to 52% of those who had not received Council support)



61%

travelled overseas to share knowledge and expertise, such as panel and conference participation (compared to 48% of those who had not received Council support)



32%

exhibited or presented at international fairs or markets (compared to 14% of those who had not received Council support)



65%

created new work overseas (compared to 38% of those who had not received Council support)



33%

undertook market research (compared to 19% of those who had not received Council support)



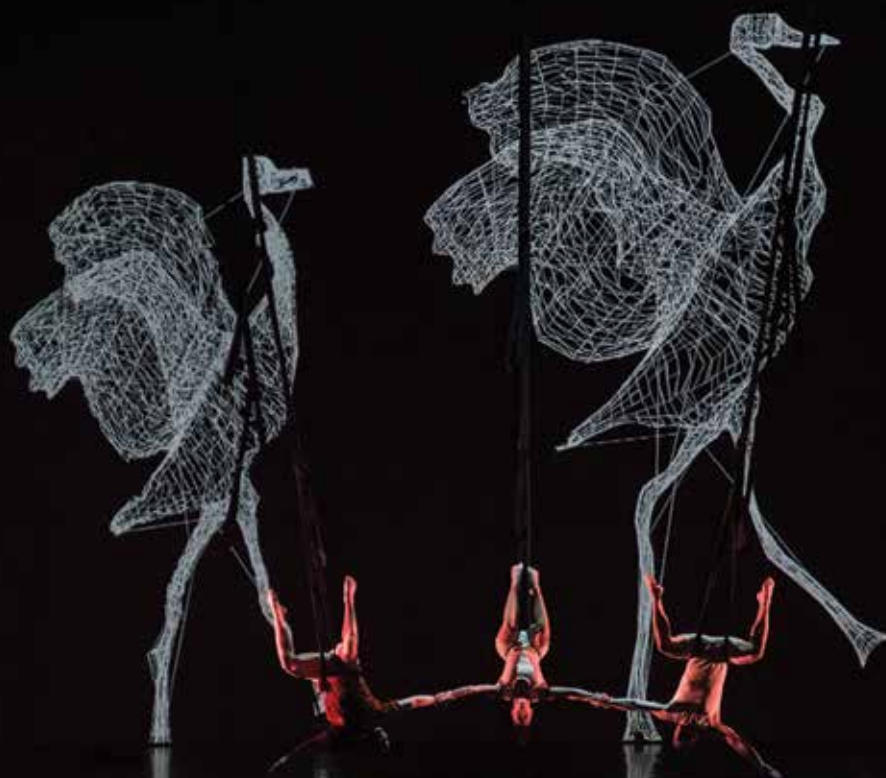
22%

sold work or rights while overseas (compared to 10% of those who had not received Council support)



65%

took part in or organised residencies that involved international artists or arts workers (compared to 29% of those who had not received Council support)

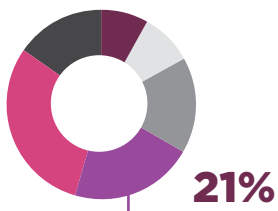


Stalker Theatre, *Creature: Dot and the Kangaroo*.
Credit: Darren Thomas.

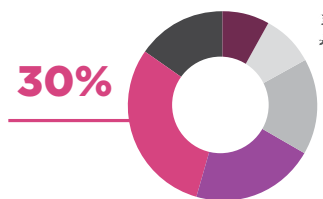
⁴ The survey asked respondents if they received support by the Council to engage in international activity over the period 2015–20. Out of 96 respondents, 77% had received support and 23% had not. Note that the survey did not ask respondents to identify which part of the Council supported their activity.

Regional trends

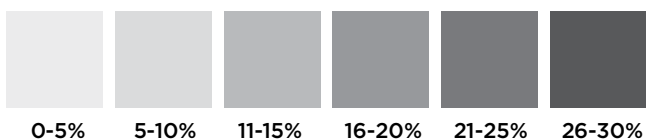
Total investment
Region: North America

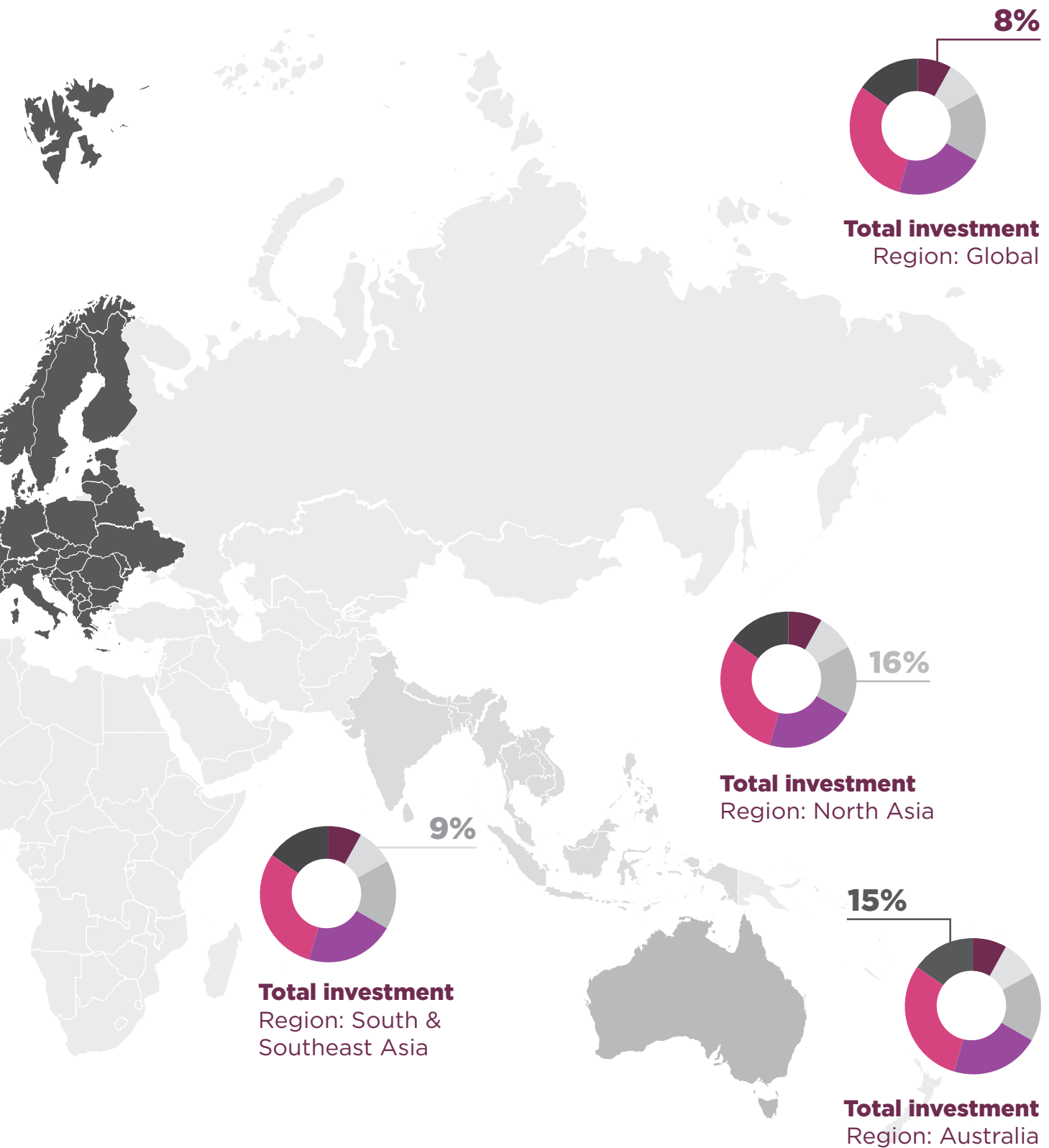


Total investment
Region: Europe



Activity (Incidents of support)





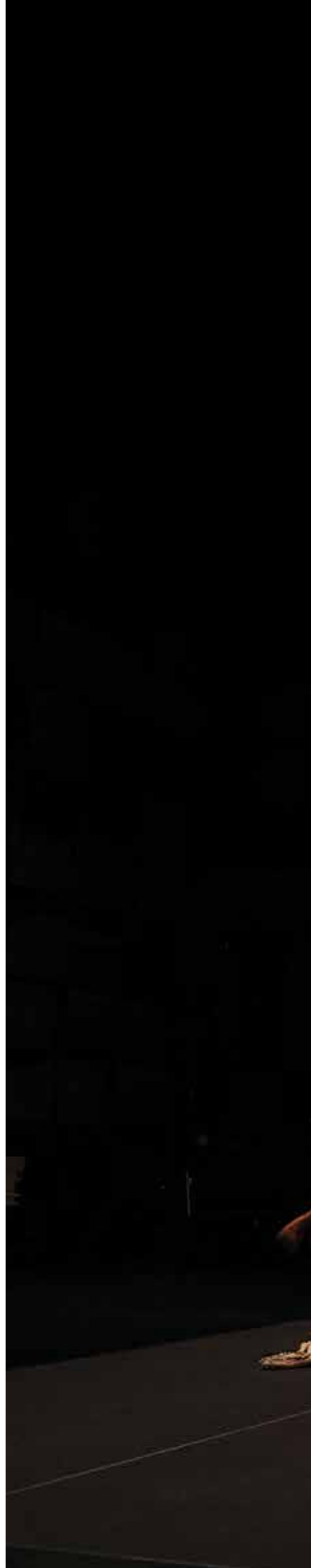
North America

Overview

- The North America region encompasses **two of the strongest established markets** for Australian creative and cultural practice: **Canada and the US**.
- **Connections between Australia and Mexico are also deepening**, with many opportunities for engagement in the cultural and creative industries.
- **First Nations peoples across all four countries** have experienced the complex and painful impacts of colonisation and there is a **significant history of First Nations-led exchange** between cultural and creative workers.

Trends

- **North America was a key region for investment in market development programs.** This is to be expected, as it is a strong established market for most art forms given the size of the population and market share within art forms.
- North America accounted for **the highest proportions of First Nations arts and theatre activity** across the life of the strategy.
- **Strong representation of First Nations practice** in North America was reflected through International Arts Strategy Outcomes Fund activity; participation in outbound programs (in the performing arts); and Tri-Nations exchanges between Canada, New Zealand and Australia (in the visual and performing arts).
- There has been **increased market demand for First Nations work** in North America over the life of the strategy in the performing arts, visual arts, and literature. This was evidenced through an increased number of presentations, exhibitions, and publications. The Council has funded several First Nations visual arts collaborative exhibitions in North America over the past few years.
- **Decolonisation is core to many of the dialogues** that underpin the new terms of global engagement, along with protocols given the volume of First Nations activity.
- **The majority of First Nations engagement was with Canada.** The US and Mexico are in a more complex position to engage internationally given their artists have not had the same level of government investment in First Nations arts and infrastructure as there has been in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.



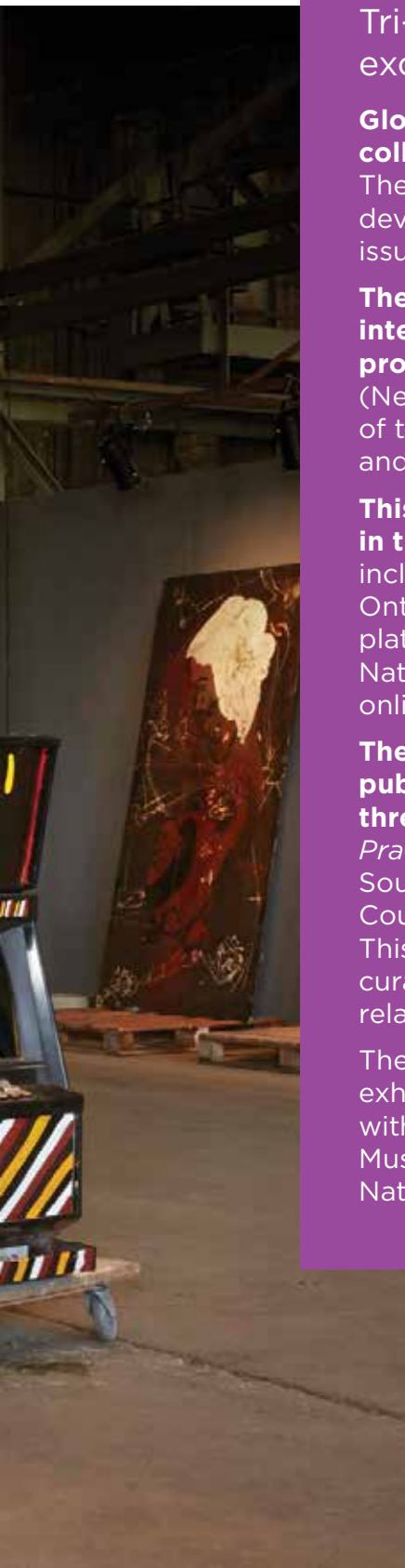
Justin Shoulder, production residency, *Carrion*, 2019, EMPAC, New York. Courtesy EMPAC and the artist. Credit: Mick Bello.

- **A large proportion of investment in the strategy supported theatre. Within this, theatre for young audiences** is a sub-genre that was well supported, both through an annual outbound program delegation to the established market platform of the International Performing Arts for Youth Showcase in Philadelphia, and through showcase, pitch presentations and touring outcomes supported through the International Arts Strategy Outcomes Fund. **Australia has a strong reputation globally for theatre for young audiences**, and the International Performing Arts for Youth Showcase is the most significant international market platform for this work.
- **Greater presentation and touring activity in cross-art form practice** was evident in North America, supported through the International Arts Strategy Outcomes Fund.
- **Theatre, dance and cross-art form organisations** described consolidating their engagement in established markets such as North America.





Tennant Creek Brio, *We are the Living History*, 2020. Installation progress view for the 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020), Cockatoo Island. Courtesy the artists and Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre. Credit: Zan Wimberley.



Tri-Nations Curators Exchange: a global First Nations exchange

Global First Nations exchanges seek to increase networks and collaborations between First Nations cultural and creative workers.

They enhance First Nations practitioners' capability to engage in market development; share knowledge; and explore cultural, practice and issues-based exchange with their international peers.

The Australia Council's Tri-Nations Curators Exchange invited international First Nations curators to come together for a three-year program, at the Asia Pacific Triennial in Brisbane (2015), in Aotearoa (New Zealand, 2016), and at the Venice Biennale (2017). The final stage of the exchange took place in Canada (2017) in Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Whistler.

This program has contributed to a wave of international engagement in the visual arts that is self-determined and First Nations-led. This includes the *aabaakwad (it clears after a storm)* conference at the Ontario Art Gallery (2018) and Biennale of Sydney *NIRIN* (2020), which platformed First Nations-led conversations on Indigenous art by First Nations artists, curators and writers; and the Taiwan First Nations-led online international dialogue, Matateko International Forum (2020).

The Tri-Nations Curators Exchange has also resulted in a significant publication outcome, in addition to several touring exhibitions in the three countries. *Becoming Our Future: Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice* was published by ARP Press, Winnipeg, and the Art Gallery of South Australia, supported by the University of Winnipeg, the Australia Council, the Canada Council for the Arts, and Creative New Zealand. This work reflects on international Indigenous methodologies in curatorial practice, to assert specific cultural knowledges, protocols and relationships; grounded in continuous international exchanges.

These practices are also exemplified in the *Naadohbii: To Draw Water* exhibition at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 2021 and 2022, a collaboration with Pātaka Art + Museum in Wellington, New Zealand; and Melbourne Museum, Museums Victoria, in Australia; featuring the work of First Nations and Indigenous artists from the three countries.

Future directions

- **Since 2015, the Council has invested in multiple self-determined First Nations exchanges,** led by First Nations cultural and creative workers across the performing and visual arts.
- **Ensuring that the full suite of First Nations activity is First Nations-led and self-determined** will be an important priority under the new strategy.

North Asia

Overview

- In **North Asia**, comprising greater China, Japan, and the Republic of South Korea, the Council's strategic investments have been **responsive to new market and intercultural collaboration opportunities**.
- **North Asia** includes some of Australia's most important trade partners, long-term creative collaborators, institutional partners, and homes of shared histories and transnational communities.



China Professional Placements: Art Space for Kids (The A.S.K.), Shanghai, 2018.
Credit: Fiona MacDonald and Art Space for Kids.

Trends

- **Relationships with North Asian presenters have been strengthened in the performing arts** through sustained presence at key festivals, meetings and market platforms over many years.⁵
- Engagement with these platforms and events has resulted in **significant presentation outcomes for Australian theatre**, particularly for the small-to-medium performing arts sector in Asia.
- **The rapid development of export markets for Australian children's books and theatre for young people in mainland China** is an example of niche, high-potential markets for Australian cultural products. China is the largest foreign language market for Australian rights sales, with more than three quarters of sales made in the last ten years being for picture books and middle-grade titles.
- **Intercultural capability building through residencies and professional placements**, as well as supporting meeting/market attendance for early career practitioners, complements the Australia Council's market development work in North Asia. These opportunities build strong professional networks for Australian curators, publishers, producers and presenters, who are in turn, able to generate opportunities for artists and writers.
- **Investment in visual arts in North Asia has expanded** from a focus on creative development and cultural exchange, to include profile building through networking with gallerists and curators, and presentation opportunities.
- **Support for Australian artists and curators to expand their networks** through art fair presence and the Visiting International Curators program continues to play an important role in embedding Australian practice in Asia's contemporary art ecology in the longer term.
- As the centres of the global contemporary art world shift, Australian artistic and curatorial expertise have been embraced at **high profile biennale and triennale platforms and art fairs across the Asia Pacific**.
- **Profiling the work of First Nations artists remains critical** for our engagement in the region.

5 These include the Australian Performing Arts Market, Tokyo Performing Arts Market in Yokohama, Performing Arts Market in Seoul, China Shanghai Performing Arts Festival and Fair, Liveworks in Sydney, the Asia Discovers Asia Meeting for Contemporary Performance in Taipei, and West Kowloon Cultural District's Freespace in Hong Kong.

Reciprocal experimental performance collaborations are thriving between Australia and Hong Kong

Asia is home to countless international meeting platforms that promote networking and exchange in the performing arts. Many of these platforms focus on collaboration and dialogue, not just the market-driven approaches to international engagement of buying and selling shows. The International Arts Strategy has supported an Australian presence at key North Asia meeting platforms.

Multi-year funded organisations, such as Performance Space, have been consistent attendees to these platforms over recent years. They reciprocate by hosting international curators, presenters, producers and artists in Sydney at their annual Liveworks festival, which is committed to programming Asia Pacific diasporic and LGBTIQ+ artists.

A multi-year exchange residency between Performance Space and the West Kowloon Cultural District has offered Australian artists the practical opportunity to undertake a series of practice development activities alongside international artist peers, before coming to Sydney to participate in Liveworks.

Since 2019, the Performance Space x West Kowloon Exchange Residency has supported five artists to participate in a targeted program of artistic and cultural exchange. These artists are Chris Williams, Albert Wong, Rainbow Chan, and Rooftop Projects: Ivor Houliker and Michelle Li. Performance Space's Artistic Director, Jeff Khan, said the exchange residency has enabled Performance Space to deepen their relationships in Hong Kong.

‘This residency initiative, supported by the Australia Council, has enabled us to significantly deepen our strong ties with the West Kowloon Cultural District and in particular its performance program, building a tangible channel of artistic exchange and collaboration between our organisations. Happily, over the course of the three years this relationship has now flourished to incorporate co-commissioning, which will see collaborations between artists from Australia and Hong Kong with outcomes in both countries.’

Jeff Khan, Performance Space Artistic Director and CEO

Hong Kong is a vibrant arts ecosystem and diverse cultural institutions make it a key international hub for Australian organisations. Since 2019, civil unrest and the COVID-19 global pandemic have challenged the viability of several Australia Council-supported projects in Hong Kong. Despite these uncertainties, Australian and Hong Kong artists and institutions have continued to collaborate online, from virtual studio visits to hybrid creative developments.

The final Performance Space x West Kowloon Exchange Residency will take the form of a series of digital exchanges with Rainbow Chan, Hong Kong collaborators Rooftop Projects and the Weitou community.

The project is a collaboration with Hong Kong's community of Indigenous Weitou women, with whom the artist shares a matrilineal heritage. Through a series of workshops and engagements spanning several years, Sydney-based Chan has recorded and documented the Weitou women's bridal laments—a cultural practice in jeopardy of dying out as the Weitou women age and their traditional practices are left behind.



Ema Yuasa, Benjamin Hancock, Nobuyoshi Asai, Mui Cheuk-yin and Nalina Wait in Sue Healey's *ON VIEW: PANORAMA*, Yokohama 2020.
Credit: Naoshi Hatori.

Future directions

- As strong public and private investment in the cultural and creative industries continues in North Asia, there is significant **opportunity to deepen co-investment and co-commissioning partnerships** with institutions.
- There are also **opportunities to grow reciprocal professional exchanges**, invest in self-determined **First Nations exchanges** in Asia, and to invest in **more sophisticated collaboration models** that embed diaspora-engaged frameworks and reciprocity.

South and Southeast Asia

Overview

- **South and Southeast Asia are some of Australia's closest neighbours.** With a huge land mass and some of the most concentrated areas of population density on this planet, the region of South and Southeast Asia offers a variety of opportunities, including **rich cultural exchange, artistic collaboration, and high audience visibility.**
- South and Southeast Asia have a complex demographic of multiple ethnicities, races, religions, and language groups. **Sustained engagement is vital to genuine dialogue in the region, in a deep and culturally conscious manner.**



Dr Corrina Bonshek and Adrian Jo Milang, *Song to the Earth* featuring Kayan Parap for the Rainforest Fringe Festival in Sarawak, Malaysia. Credit: Kayu Malam Productions.

Trends

- A focus of the South and Southeast Asia strategy was **capacity building, professional development and knowledge exchange**. More than a third of the investment in South and Southeast Asia under the International Arts Strategy was in labs, exchanges, and reciprocal programs, accounting for the highest proportion of investment in this mechanism across all regions (38%).
- With 14 countries in the region, and only a handful of mature markets, a rigorous approach to **relationship-building and working with the region in a culturally conscious manner were key**. Several partnerships (financial, host and otherwise) were realised in the life of the strategy, with co-design and delivery models radically revisioned to a shared-values approach.
- It was important to recognise Australia's economic and political power in the region and to **offer reciprocity: matching any opportunities to engage in the region** with hosting artists and creative workers from the region here in Australia. For example, Dance-In-Transit, the Debra Porch Award, the Australia-Singapore Digital Residencies, Exchanging Expertise initiatives, the Curatorial Associates Program: Sydney x Ho Chi Minh City, and the Australia-India Experimental Exchange.
- In South and Southeast Asia, **visual arts received the highest amount of funding**, with a high proportion of investment in outbound activity such as the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Dhaka Art Summit and Experimenter Curator's Hub, and an increase in artist-curators from South and Southeast Asia in the Incoming Visitor Programs. Significant outcomes have been realised through exhibition opportunities for Australian artists at **high profile biennales and art summits**.
- **Artists, collectives and super-curators from growing cities** are making their mark as the lens of the contemporary art world shifts to these regions. These cities include Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Kuala Lumpur, George Town, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Manila, Kochi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Chennai, New Delhi, Kathmandu, Colombo, and Dhaka.
- **Singapore's accessible art scene is a gateway to its neighbours for ready-to-tour productions and exhibitions**, also offering a rapidly growing network of young independent and small-to-medium organisations and sectors. Many collaborations have been seeded through the Australia-Singapore Digital Residencies program and responsive strategic investments.
- **Literature received the highest amount of investment through outbound programs**. In particular, the India Literature Exploratory to Jaipur Literature Festival was funded over the five years of the strategy with accompanying research trips to Delhi, Kerala and Chennai.
- While visual arts, performing arts and literature in high visibility spaces were supported through the strategy, **there is space for a more nuanced conversation between the national and the international**. This will be prioritised in the new strategy.

Hyper-local, intercultural work connecting generations

Jamie Lewis's *The Little Old Cooking Club That Could* was four years brewing and two years in the making. Two contingency plans and one re-imagination later, this intergenerational work was programmed as part of Drama Box's SCENES 2020 in Singapore.

The work connected generations, with **Singaporean-Australian performance-maker Jamie Lewis** collaborating with participants aged 9-12 years and 62-72 years old through an open call out.

The participants took turns **preparing a meal** for one another and packed it in a *tingkat*, or tiffin carrier, which was then delivered by the artist's own father, Papa Lewis. Participants **tuned in to an audio work** of conversations between children and seniors across Singapore and Australia while they savoured their meals. They then **recorded audio reflections** of their own, which were compiled into a playlist for public listening.

As a first-generation migrant from Singapore, this was the first time since Jamie left the country ten years ago that her work was shown in her childhood home. **The hyper-local nature of this international project was timely and responsive to increasing calls for smart touring.**

‘Whilst the project garnered a lot of interest in earlier days, it never received the tangible support and resources to make it happen. It wasn't until the [Australia Council's] International Development team understood the deep, intercultural relationship [the work] and my practice had with Singapore/Drama Box that it/I finally found its/my legs.’

Jamie Lewis, Singaporean-Australian performance-maker

Future directions

- The strategy had clear and overarching ambitions for a **diaspora-driven Asia engagement framework** with our closest neighbours. This was seen across all art forms and activities in the South and Southeast Asia program and is a major win for the strategy that will be continued into the future. In the last year of the International Arts Strategy, half (50%) of the investment in organisations who work primarily with CALD communities was in North Asia and South and Southeast Asia.
- **Increased representation in all of the Australia Council's cultural engagement priority areas in meaningful and self-determined ways** remains an urgent priority. The priority areas are: First Nations people, children and young people, cultural diversity, older people, people with disability, and regional and remote Australia.
- **Cultural safety of First Nations artists** in exchanges with the region is important long-term work.
- While the focus of the retiring strategy has been on diversity and inclusion, **embedding access and equity across all our areas of work** will be a key feature of the next one.



Jamie Lewis, *The Little Old Cooking Club That Could*, Singapore.
Courtesy the artist.

Europe

Overview

- **Europe offers established infrastructure for international arts, significant markets, and large populations.** The Australia Council has supported many Australian artists to visit and work in Europe over many years, particularly in the key markets of France, Germany and the UK. The equally mature, if smaller, markets of Belgium, Switzerland, Ireland and the Nordic countries have also provided key presentation opportunities.
- Over time, **Australian artists have developed a diverse range of relationships with presenters and platforms in Europe.**

Trends

- **Long-term international market development activity and investment** in this region has resulted in many strategic opportunities for Australian artists.
- Investment in activity in Europe through the **International Arts Strategy Outcomes Fund** was higher than in other regions over the course of the strategy.
- There is huge sector demand to take up opportunities in this region. But while proposed projects and partnerships are of the highest quality, there is a significant gap in funding to meet the demand for **presentations, touring and exhibitions of Australian work in Europe.**
- **The majority of our international residency partners are in Europe,** and in the final year of the strategy, these residencies supported artists working across all art form areas supported by the Australia Council.
- Three residencies were primarily focused on **visual arts** (Acme, London; Mordant Family/Australia Council Affiliated Fellowship at the American Academy in Rome; and Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin).
- Two residencies focused on **literature** (BR Whiting Studio, Rome and the Keesing Studio at the Cité Internationale des arts, Paris).
- Another two residencies supported artists working **across any art form** (Cité Internationale des arts, Paris and Helsinki International Artist Programme).



- **Residencies provide a unique opportunity for artists** to immerse themselves in a new arts context, market, community and culture. The experience enables them to articulate their practice within a global context and build knowledge, networks and partnerships. There is a need to ensure the opportunities are targeted to better meet strategic priorities and enable clearer connections to market and profile-enhancing opportunities.
- Europe accounted for the highest proportions of **dance, cross-art form, emerging and experimental arts (EEA) and music activity** under the International Arts Strategy.
- Overall, **dance received the highest amount of investment in Europe** and was the only art form that was supported across all program areas. Key dance activities included Australian participation in Internationale Tanzmesse, the largest international professional gathering for contemporary dance in 2014, 2016 and 2018.
- At the **December Dance** festival in 2018, 12 Australian artists and companies were presented as part of an Australian focus in the two-week program. 38 key European presenters were supported to attend. Direct outcomes included invitations for further festival presentations and a co-production of a new work.
- **Australia's participation at the Venice Biennale** involved three artistic teams over the course of the strategy: Fiona Hall and Linda Michael (2015), Tracey Moffatt and Natalie King (2017) and Angelica Mesiti and Juliana Engberg (2019). The Australian Pavilion welcomed over 884,500 visitors across the three Biennales.



Salote Tawale, *I don't see colour*,
exhibition installation view, Perth
Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2021.
Credit: Bo Wong.

Investing in the success of Australian experimental practice in Europe

EEA has had greater success in Europe than in other regions. Experimental practice has always been a prominent focus for Europe due to the nature of the key markets of the UK, Germany and France. In these markets, **formal experimentation and socially and politically engaged work** is prioritised, as is the incorporation of **new technologies and media**.

In 2015, Melbourne's contemporary multi-arts space The SUBSTATION and Glasgow-based Cryptic, presenter of the Sonica festival, began to develop **a multi-year international exchange program**. Each presenter supported and programmed UK and Australian artists in their program through presentations and residencies in a reciprocal artist exchange. **The exchange opened up new markets for Australian and UK artists** working between sound-based practice, experimental/new music and cross-art form visual arts practice.

Artists with an experimental practice were also supported to undertake **residencies in Europe** through the International Arts Strategy. Recent examples include Justin Shoulder and composer/sound designer Corin Iletto who presented *Carrion: Episode 1* at Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2019, alongside a one-month residency where they continued the development of a new work.

'Australia is a really big place but one of the pieces of feedback I hear from artists is that there is a really limited scope for making a practice when you work in EEA. Our international activity is part of building a sustainable practice.'

Freya Waterson, independent producer,
Focus Group, March 2021



Angelica Mesiti, *ASSEMBLY*, 2019 (production still) three-channel video installation in architectural amphitheater. HD video projections, colour, six-channel mono sound, 25 mins, dimensions variable. © Photography: Josh Raymond. Commissioned by the Australia Council for the Arts on the occasion of the 58th International Art Exhibition-La Biennale di Venezia, courtesy of the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Australia and Galerie Allen, Paris.

Future directions

- Building on the previous five years of the strategy there are **opportunities to grow reciprocal partnerships and exchange** across our international residencies and other programs.
- **New approaches to digital, mobility, and environmental and career sustainability** are key concerns in Europe at present. There is scope for continued knowledge sharing in these areas between Europe and Australia.
- **Increasing our support of diverse artists and creative workers** across the Australia Council's cultural engagement priority areas is also a priority in Europe.⁶
- There are identified gaps for Australian **artists from Asia Pacific diaspora communities** with long histories of displacement and migration; and for **First Nations-led and self-determined exchange**.



6 The current priority areas are: First Nations people, children and young people, cultural diversity, older people, people with disability, and regional and remote Australia.

Thank you

The Australia Council for the Arts is grateful for the support of the national and international partners and stakeholders we worked with in the stewardship and delivery of our International Arts Strategy and programs between 2015 and 2020, as well as the interim year 2020-21.

Federal government partners

Austrade
Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Australian Government, Office for the Arts
Australia-Japan Foundation
Australia-Korea Foundation
National Foundation for Australia-China Relations

State government partners

Create NSW
Creative Victoria
artsACT
Arts South Australia
Arts Queensland
Arts Tasmania
Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, WA
Arts NT

Local government partners

City of Melbourne
City of Sydney
City of Parramatta Council
(Parramatta Artists' studios)

International government partners

Arts Council of Korea
Arts Council of Taiwan
Arts Council Tokyo
British Council
Canada Council for the Arts
China National Arts Fund
City of Toronto, Canada
City of Vancouver, Canada
Consulate General of Canada, Sydney
Creative New Zealand
Department of Canadian Heritage
Japan Foundation
Ministry of Culture, Republic of China (Taiwan)
National Arts Council Singapore

Philanthropic partners

The Estate of Debra Porch
The Mordant Family
The Venice Biennale sponsors, supporters and champions 2015, 2017 and 2019

Australian cultural partners

4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art
 Abbotsford Convent
 Adelaide Festival Centre
 Adelaide Fringe
 APRA AMCOS
 Art et al.
 Art Gallery of South Australia
 Arts House, City of Melbourne
 Artspace
 Asialink Arts
 Asia Triennale Of Performing Arts
 Australian Music Centre
 Australian Performing Arts Market
 Australian Publishers Association
 Biennale of Sydney
 BlakDance
 Contemporary Asian Australian Performance
 Copyright Agency Cultural Fund
 Dancehouse
 Darwin Festival Foundation
 Footscray Community Arts Centre
 Force Majeure
 Institute for Modern Art, Brisbane
 Liquid Architecture
 MAAP - Media Art Asia Pacific
 Moogahlin Performing Arts
 National Gallery of Australia
 OzAsia Festival
 Parramatta Artist Run Initiative
 Performance Space
 Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts
 PHOTO Australia
 Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art

Sounds Australia
 Sydney Writers' Festival
 UNSW Galleries
 Word Travels
 Writing NSW
 YIRRAMBOI Festival

International cultural partners

Acme London, UK
 Adishakti Laboratory for Theatre Arts Research, India
 American Academy in Rome, Italy
 Art Basel, Hong Kong
 Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada
 Art Omi, US
 Art Space for Kids (The A.S.K.), China
 Arts Equator, Singapore
 Arts Midwest, US
 Asia Discovers Asia Meeting, Taipei
 Asia Europe Foundation, Singapore
 Asian Producers Platform, Republic of Korea
 ASSITEJ - International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People, Denmark
 Association of Asia Pacific Performing Arts Centres, Singapore
 Association of Asian Performing Arts Festivals, Singapore
 Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Canada
 Bangkok International Performing Arts Market, Thailand
 Beijing International Book Fair, China
 Blue Cabin Floating Artist Residency, Canada
 Cemeti Institute for Art and Society, Indonesia

China Residencies, China
China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair, China
China Shanghai International Performing Arts Fair, China
China Writers Association, China
Chronus Art Center, China
Cité internationale des arts, France
Classical:NEXT, The Netherlands
Creative Cultural Collaborations, Canada
December Dance Festival, Belgium
Dhaka Art Summit, Bangladesh
Dublin Theatre Festival, Ireland
Experimenter Galleries, India
The Factory Contemporary Art Space, Vietnam
Gendai, Canada
grunt gallery, Canada
Gudskul, Indonesia
Gwangju Biennale Foundation, South Korea
HIAP – Helsinki International Artist Programme, Finland
HCMA Architecture + Design, Canada
I: project space, China
IETM, Belgium
Indigenous Peoples Cultural Foundation, Taiwan
International Performing Arts for Youth, US
International Society for Performing Arts, US
International Studio and Curatorial Program, US
International Symposium on Electronic Art, United Kingdom
International Theatre Festival of Kerala, India
Internationale Tanzmesse nrw, Germany
Institute for Provocation, China
Jaipur Literature Festival, India
KHUBLEI Inc, India
Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India
Korea Arts Management Service, Republic of Korea
Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Germany
Kyoto Art Center, Japan
KYTA Leh and Ladakh, India
La Biennale di Venezia, Venice
Lumiere Vancouver Society, Canada
Media City Seoul Biennale, Republic of Korea
Ming Contemporary Art Museum, China
Mountain Echoes, India
Museum of Vancouver: MOV, Canada
National Arts Centre, Indigenous Theatre Department, Canada
Native Earth Performing Arts, Canada
OCAT Shanghai, China
Other Sights for Artists' Projects, Canada
Performing Arts Market Seoul, South Korea
Palais de Tokyo, France
Para Site, Hong Kong
Performance Space New York, US
Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, US
Power Station of Art, China
Pulima Art Festival, Taiwan
PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, Canada
Remai Modern, Canada
Rimbun Dahan, Malaysia
ROHM Theatre Kyoto, Japan
Salihara Arts Centre, Indonesia
Sarai – CSDS, India
Serendipity Arts Foundation, India
Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center, China
Shanghai International Dance Center, China
SHIFT Festival, China
SNS Arts Development Consultancy, India
Split Works, China
Taipei International Book Exhibition, Taiwan
Taipei Performing Arts Center, Taiwan
The White Pube, UK

TPAM – Performing Arts Meeting in
Yokohama, Japan

Tourism Vancouver, Canada

Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada

West Kowloon Cultural District,
Hong Kong

Western Arts Alliance, US

Wuzhen Theatre Festival, China

Yogyakarta Biennale Foundation,
Indonesia

Australian university partners

Macquarie University

University of Melbourne

University of Newcastle

Western Sydney University

International university partners

Curtis R. Priem Experimental
Media and Performing Arts Center at
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, US

Kluge Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection,
University of Virginia, US

Krea University, India

University of Winnipeg, Canada

Independent partners

Asha Bee Abraham

Chloe Li

Corinna Berndt

Erica McCalman

Eugenia Lim

Fraser Orford

Fuyuko Mezawa

Jacob Boehme

Jasmin Thompson

Jessica Row

Joel Bray

Lara Dykun

Laura McLean

Lynn Fu

Mark Moffatt

Mary Louise Carbone

Mat Spisbah

Max Presdee

Mehak Sawhney

Mok Cui Yin

Nerrilee Weir

Sangeeta Isvaran

Shivanjani Lal

Tian Zhang

Wang Yan

Zainab Syed

‘I am a Pacific Islander Indigenous person living on lands that are not my own. I come from a country that operates from deficit model contexts of international engagement through development work and delegations focus. I would like to see that shift to self-determined, empowered contexts. Working internationally is important in the repatriation of artefacts, our ancestors and bringing them home.’

Yasbelle Kerkow, visual artist, Focus Group, March 2021

An invitation

The Australia Council remains actively committed to supporting Australian artists, creative workers and organisations to stay connected internationally, and to respond to ongoing challenges to cross-border collaboration.

Learnings from the past five years will help to identify the most effective strategies to strengthen international engagement; and increase its impact as an essential investment in Australian arts, creativity and culture at this critical time.

As a leading public investor in international engagement for the Australian arts and cultural sector, our continued investment in this new era will focus on:

- Global First Nations exchange
- Asia Pacific engagement
- Risk-taking, experimentation and digital futures

To continue these levels of impact, the Australia Council is seeking strategic partnerships for direct investment in independent artists, creative workers and small-to-medium organisations to generate and ensure sustainable career pathways and creative relationships.

Help us empower the Australian sector to be part of the global conversation, listen deeply, engage fluently and demonstrate the depth and vitality of Australian arts and culture.

‘Before the pandemic began, I had only ever been funded by the Australia Council to undertake international work and opportunities, never to work in Australia. I am incredibly grateful for those international opportunities, where my life and practice have been significantly enriched by varied and wonderful encounters with both artistic peers and audiences around the world. When international borders closed, I was worried if I would be able to sustain my practice in Australia.’

Angela Goh, independent dancer and choreographer, Focus Group, March 2021



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international@australiacouncil.gov.au

‘The conversations I’m having more so with my international counterparts and collaborators than I’m having at home, are about the function of art and its relevance in society right now and into the future.’

Jacob Boehme, multidisciplinary theatre-maker and choreographer,
INTEL podcast, June 2020

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